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IMMEDIATE CARE FOR THE SOUL'S WELFARE ENFORCED.

"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"—MATT. xvi. 26.

VERY much has been said of the dignity of human nature. Of its capabilities much may be said with truth. There is discoverable, amidst the ruin which the fall has wrought upon man, elements and susceptibilities of high and important character, clearly indicating that great things may be made to attend on his destiny, that infinite things lie within his reach. The Saviour, by the emphatic inquiries just cited, intimates to us that we hold within a soul, which a world ought not to purchase, which a world ought not to put to hazard.

I would now turn your attention to the spiritual being, the soul. I would waken a greater interest in it. I would prompt you to immediate care for its welfare.

I. To produce this effect, let our first consideration be the fact that the soul is not subject to destruction.

Although the soul in its nature is not indestructible, yet by the will of God it is so. It is Heaven's decree, made known every where in the Scriptures, that the spiritual being within us shall never cease to be. This single fact invests the soul at once with infinite importance. Every object sinks before us the moment we are informed that it is temporary. Point us to the most solid structure which the pride or folly of men have erected; point us even to the everlasting hills, the great globe itself, mighty and durable as they are; when you tell us they are growing old,

and one day are all to pass away, and no place be found for them, you have essentially shorn them of their impressiveness, have greatly diminished our interest in them. You and I have a soul that shall outlive the heavens and the earth, the works of man and the institutions of society; and, like its Creator, beyond the reach of changes or destruction, dwell in its own eternity! I feel, I confess, a profound respect for that one thing alone, of all this crowded terrestrial scene, which shall stand up imperishable and eternal, and see the whole mighty maze and mass of things about it tumbling into dissolution. It rises to a value and importance infinitely above them all. Our anxieties and cares for this mortal evil and these worldly matters are misplaced. Let us leave the things that are temporal, passing while you behold them, and gather our thoughts, gather our cares around this spirit that will live as long as God who made it—this spirit that will have duties and interests when all besides it shall have passed away.

II. Another fact, showing us that we should regard the immortal spirit within us with great interest, is its capacity for intelligence.

Were we to select the most unfavorable instances among the most ignorant and unlettered of the human family, we should find the intelligence possessed at the age of fifty is an important amount beyond that of the first hour of life. If you could follow such a mind, even though without book, teacher, or guide, you would witness it active and vigilant at almost every waking moment; catching knowledge of objects immediately around it; then looking farther, and traversing and examining a wider circle; and then a wider circle still, as years advanced—ever learning, and ever more eager to learn, and constantly increasing in strength and facilities to learn.

You have always loved the old simile which likens the mind in its growing to the acorn, shooting itself forth, first in a single germ and then in an expanding blade, and then into branches, upward and outward, on every side, till it has pushed itself forth into a noble, luxuriant, spreading tree. You feel the force of it as you look back and remember the prattler of your home fireside, and now see the growth of mind which has taken place, and notice how much wider is the circle over which it moves. A mind, under the care of skilful teachers, and lured to mental acquisitions by the hope of gratification and reward, would give you still more surprise and pleasure by its constantly expanding and treasuring of knowledge. What expansion—what treasured riches had the mind of Newton, Locke, Milton, and Bacon attained to before they left the world! How little of it all had they at the first five or ten years of their being!

Susceptibility and tendency to expand with growing intelligence is constitutional. The very framework and structure of the soul are a framework and structure for acquiring and retaining knowledge. If it exist and be in health, it must act in this manner. The question is not whether mind shall be educated, it will be! Now, then, contemplate the futurity of the immaterial spirit which you hold within you. Remembering that its first acts are efforts for knowledge, its first improvement is expansion with gathering intelligence—remembering that it attains, besides new expansion and new intelligence, a power to expand, and to learn

at every succeeding moment of its existence, and that it exists forever and ever.

You perceive it only *enters* on its career in the present life. Death forms an event important to its progress; throws off a heavy, diseased, dissolving mass of matter, which, hanging about the soul, imposes clogs, and suffocations, and restraints upon its movements. These depressing causes—these pressures upon the spirit being removed—unrestrained, unobstructed—with all that God has created matter or spirit, the Creator himself, its own nature, duties and destinies to study—the soul must grow in intelligence beyond any examples exhibited here—must make attainments of which we can probably form no adequate conception. As there will be no restraints, so there will be no approachable boundaries to its movements. If we would follow its progress in knowledge under these new and happier facilities, after death has given the soul its own freedom and power, and a field to move in no narrower than the universe, we should need ourselves to be released from our present restraints and obstructions. To follow these freed spirits in their progress in intelligence, we must be freed spirits ourselves. I have only to remind you that you have such a capacious and susceptible soul—a soul not only formed immortal, but formed for this immeasurable, eternal progress in intelligence.

Noble and important indeed is the spiritual being, the occupant of this earthly tabernacle! What do you carry within you? A soul fitted in an eternal progress in knowledge and intellect and power, to approach forever the infinite mind of the omniscient God himself! How like its Maker may be the soul! How is your neglect of it reprov'd—your worldliness, your toils and solitudes for sensual good shown to be infinite folly! Ought we not to care more for this immortal part of us, so eternally progressive in knowledge, and cease our feverish ardor for this fleetingness, nothingness, by which we are surrounded? Away this solicitude and labor for this mortal coil; the soul, the intelligent, expanding soul—let this be your care.

III. There is another fact which will be thought to give still higher interest and importance to this spiritual being which we call the soul, and waken us to greater efforts for its good. I mean its capacity for virtue, moral excellence.

The soul's capacity for intelligence endlessly increasing, receives its importance and interest chiefly from its intimate connection with our moral susceptibilities. Our intellectual faculties first minister to the moral affections—assisting to feed, sustain, enrich, elevate them—then communicate abroad the blessings which the heart devises and designs. Moral excellence is the original source of all that is interesting and valuable connected with the soul of man and with his destiny.

We need not attempt any metaphysical dissertation on the nature and attributes of virtue. Nor indeed is it necessary to repeat all the definitions that have been given of it. I would only say so much as to turn your minds upon the simple idea of moral goodness. Virtue has been described doing good to mankind, in obedience to the will of God. It has been divided into three classes of duties. 1. Duties towards God: as

piety, reverence, resignation, and gratitude. 2. Towards other men : as justice, charity, fidelity, loyalty. 3. Towards ourselves : as chastity, sobriety, temperance, care of health and life.

The Scriptures very accurately have included all virtue in these two comprehensive precepts : "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself." Obedience to these two laws would include the adequate exercise of all the emotions necessary and proper towards every one of the objects in the universe, and these emotions would prompt to all the conduct due in all the relations in which a human being can be placed. Benevolent affections, and the corresponding conduct to which such affections give birth, toward God, toward all men, toward ourselves, is a simple definition of virtue, moral goodness, which all can understand entirely. We will keep this intelligible idea before us.

That this our internal spiritual being is capable of being virtuous instead of vicious, of good deeds instead of bad ones, does not admit of any question ; but to what extent are we capable of moral goodness ? In what estimation should we regard it ? What interest should we feel in this capacity for virtue ? Contemplate one of the best exemplifications of moral goodness in the present world.

Virtue thrives best in the middle walks of life, equally removed from temptation to the luxury and dissipation of the fashionable, on the one hand, and the corruptions of the degraded, hopeless, and abandoned on the other. Our instance of elevated virtue shall be sought for from this medium condition of human life—not indeed untempted to sin, for then it could have no trial of virtue—but possessing partial immunity from the grosser contaminations of the world. To illustrate our capacity for moral worth, I refer to an individual moral portrait. This man was originally of sour and complaining temper, passionate and severe, making himself uncomfortable as a companion. He is now eminently amiable and unruffled in his spirit ; so uniform is the softness and sweetness of his feelings, on almost all occasions, that he is supposed to need no personal discipline. His feelings flow gently on like the deep sheltered stream which no winds can reach, no outward causes agitate. He has his preferences, but does not manifest impatience whenever they are not consulted. He loves prosperity, but his soul is too deep a fountain to be set in commotion by ordinary adversities.

As a social being in his several relations to others around him, to friends, relatives, fellow-citizens, benefactors, dependents, his character and behavior are what you would infer from the serenity and subdued mildness of his general disposition. One trait of character too rare in the world belongs to him in all his relations. I mean honesty, pure honesty, in its largest sense. When he speaks, he intends to speak the truth ; to utter what he thinks and feels exactly ; he declares himself outwardly what he is inwardly. In his acts towards others he endeavors to be strictly equitable. He endeavors to be faithful entirely to every trust reposed in him. It is understood in the community that his verbal promise is as good, because as surely fulfilled, as any paper bond, signed, sealed, and delivered before witnesses. If you go to him for advice, he does not inquire with himself how he may so counsel as to flatter and please you, or receive some advantage to himself. He gives you his best judgment—he points you to the course he would himself take. If you come to be

acquainted sufficiently to obtain his special friendship, you will find it true—a friendship for you as a fellow-being, a man—not for you as an honored or prospered individual simply, cold and strange to you the moment your distinction and wealth being gone you become as weak as any other man. He seems warmer and more active when you most need and are most unable to make him any return. You may never distrust him, he will not forsake you at all, so long as you are worthy. O are there, indeed, in the great mass of human depravity, such specimens of frank, fast, honest friendship! Who is he? Pray point us to such virtue in this fallen world! You will discover this individual, on observing him closely, to be directing his efforts, though he engage in the ordinary cares and business of life, fixing his interests and affections upon two special objects—the rendering all men, whom he can influence, better and happier.

He would dissipate gloom from every mind, remove the pressure from every heart. He would be a guide to every orphan that wanders and weeps without a helper. He would avert the calamities that he sees gathering upon the unsheltered heads of the poor. He would encourage the idle to industry—he would allure the ignorant to knowledge. He would introduce harmony between alienated families, friendship and peace between all that have fallen out by the way. Many are the hearts which beat quicker with joy for his ministrations of kindness. Many are the persons who are led to competence, knowledge, usefulness, self-respect, and peace, by his efforts and example.

He does not forget that there is a better world to be sought, a worse one to be escaped. You may see him kindly reminding a neighbor of the guilt and danger that wait upon transgression; referring him to the invitations of the gospel; endeavoring to induce him to accept them by a development before him of all the dreadful infinity of eternal woe as the doom of incorrigible sinners, and by pointing him to the heaven of heavens as the everlasting inheritance of the penitent and believing. You may hear him referring an alarmed and anxious one, who is crying, "What shall I do to be saved?" to the Saviour's words, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." In his efforts for others he does not forget himself. He fears God and keeps his commandments; he "allures to brighter worlds, and leads the way."

But who is this amiable being, of such inward heavenly temper and such purity of life, that loves and obeys his Maker; that makes it the effort and aim of life to reform and improve the character and the conduct of all his fellow-men; to make all hearts purer, all hearts happier—to gather as many as he may under God into heaven from this fallen world? Who is this minister of mercy? Has any such man lived and breathed among us? We have not seen such men in this selfish, avaricious, wicked world. But is not man capable of this? Have I described any thing unattainable? May not education and grace make every man such in a larger or smaller sphere? Have I come up in this moral portrait to what you have conceived of Paul, or even of Howard and many others? If I have, is not this character of loveliness and kindness possible to all, and these paths of usefulness open to all, this walk with God free to all?

I have not ascribed perfection to this amiable friend of God. A very

pure and virtuous being he is ; but not one attribute, I allege, not one act have I ascribed to him that might not belong to every individual of this audience. Thus we are all capable of virtue, moral goodness, goodness of soul prompting to outward excellence of conduct. I do not touch the question of moral inability. I know that man is depraved wholly, that every heart is corrupt to the core. But under the power of education and the grace of God we are thus capable of godlike virtue. Such are our susceptibilities here. But the soul, if it enter upon a course of virtue, *only enters* upon it in the present world—only just wakes, and starts forth on its career of goodness here—only just begins to throb with holy exercises and to put forth outward labors of love. Death, more important to our progress in virtue than to our growth in knowledge, removes the spirit from all the instruments and allurements of sin.

How may a saint grow in holiness when received into heaven, when released from temptation, and when surrounded by every possible motive to moral goodness ! God, high on his eternal throne, will unfold to the spirit his glory, and the fullest, loftiest, richest emotions of that spirit gather and fix upon him ; its highest, best service will be rendered to him. Fellow spirits are around it to be loved and blessed. Its efforts, so interrupted on earth, are now unceasing ; so imperfect then, are perfect now ; its love, so often chilled and misdirected then, is pure and undiverted now. What it ought to feel, it does feel ; what it ought to do, it performs. How long is this to remain ? Pure spirits, will they always be pure ? entirely as they should be, rich in goodness, untouched by any impurity or imperfection, never, never, never wearied, never interrupted, never unfaithful ? Will they always be holy ? Yes, always holy, and more and more enriched with holiness as the ages of eternity roll away. Yes, more and more pure, more and more holy ; rather more and more enriched with moral goodness. They never can be more than perfectly holy, such as they are when they enter heaven.

But as the intellect learns more and more of the Divine Being, spreads itself more extensively over his infinite affairs, and comprehends them more, the emotions towards God will rise to corresponding ardor, will swell to corresponding elevation. The interests of fellow souls in their large capacities, in the long eternal course of intelligence and purity and happiness before them, will be constantly, as ages roll away, better understood and appreciated, and each spirit will feel intenser passion for all the rest, and put forth more exertions to enrich them with goodness and glory. Holy world ! Pure spirits ! God in the centre of them ! Immortality their own ! a long, eternal course of increasing holiness to run ! Who can measure your virtue, your moral goodness, when some millions of ages shall have passed away—when you shall have stretched on your course into eternity, farther than the intellectual powers can reach ! You are lost in the attempted conception. O that we had words to tell you the glory there is to be revealed ! Crowns, thrones, and worlds, what are ye all when compared with it ! May I stand up at last a pure spirit like my Maker ; his virtue my virtue ; my close resemblance to the holy God a closer one constantly—forever ! What else, my soul, is worth thy care, all else tread beneath thee ! Be an angel ! Enter upon an eternal course of holiness !

And every hearer here has a soul capable of such a high course of

glory, and honor, and immortality. This is the career, then, we all may run. Leave, then, these meaner things. I must earnestly reprove your worldliness—your untiring, overweening care of your outward self—your pursuit of earthly riches and pleasures. Such objects all shrink into utter insignificance before these grand interests of the soul.

IV. A fourth fact, which gives interest and importance to our spiritual being, and should waken our care for its welfare, is its capacity for happiness.

We learn by our experience and by observation of others, that human happiness is dependent upon virtue. Animals without reason and conscience may have negative enjoyment without any moral character. But man, formed to discern between right and wrong, to approve virtue and condemn vice, and to feel himself accountable at the bar of his own judgment at the higher bar of God, cannot be happy without being good, and he cannot be good without being happy. Every person has learned by looking within upon himself, and observed in the case of others, that, though adverse and untoward events make deductions from our enjoyments, yet so far as there is integrity of principle, purity of intention, excellence of conduct, and consciousness that this is so, so far there is happiness always, sweet peace, a delicious enjoyment absorbing the soul, so that it feels the refreshing of the internal waters of life, of which if a man drink he shall never thirst again. The soul is full; for the time asks no better joys; overflows with bliss. Such seasons all good men know, when, their sins and imperfections out of view, they feel the consciousness of moral goodness, and there comes over the spirit the assurance that God looks upon them with approbation, and they approve and respect themselves.

Observation of others has often furnished us with similar examples. You have often seen happiness in circumstances so unpropitious as to leave you in no doubt that it must have been fed from an *inward* fountain of moral goodness, affording a consciousness of integrity. Have you never entered an abode of poverty and seclusion from the world, and marked the simple, calm pleasure, which was there, habitually there, though there was *nothing* in the outward world to afford it. It was good feeling toward God and man, and so far as opportunity and power was given, good doing. It was moral goodness, and the testimony of a good conscience.

Persons are often seen with afflictions beating terribly upon them, their property scattered, their friends dead, their expectations cut off, their earthly prospects perfectly dark—seen still calm and happy. They have the best of all their possessions still left to them, a treasure beyond the reach of vicissitude and trouble, I mean their virtue—a love of truth and righteousness is their own, which no power can take from them. This made Paul and Silas happy in their prison, John in his banishment, the Martyrs in their sufferings, Christians generally in their reverses and disappointments, and in their death. All the blessed anticipations of hope in the two worlds have their foundation in moral worth.

The whole current of Scripture corresponds with this representation. No one truth probably is so often in the Bible, as that the good are happy; that virtue and happiness are united under the Divine Govern-

ment inseparably and forever. One object of the Scriptures throughout in recovering a fallen race to goodness, is to make them happy. Accordingly, this sentiment is reiterated in every form, unceasingly reiterated in the Scriptures that the good are happy. Great peace have all they that love thy law; shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace; in the greatest of all extremities he is happy. Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord, happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee. Happy is the man that feareth God alway. He that keepeth the law, happy is he. Blessed, happy is he, that doeth righteousness at all times. The Lord blesseth the habitation of the just. Blessed are the meek, said the Saviour, the merciful, the pure in heart, they that hunger and thirst after righteousness. Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it. Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord. The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree; light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. The hope of the righteous shall be gladness. The fruit of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever. God giveth a man that is good in his sight, wisdom, and knowledge, and joy! The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. He shall enter into peace. Christ will say, Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord. The righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father!

Such every where is the representation of the Holy Scriptures. It is the universal and eternal law of the universe, that goodness shall be ever attended with happiness, as wickedness is with suffering. Neither can be separated. The whole spirit and conduct of the divine government depend on this union. Every thing is provided and arranged, both for time and eternity in reference to this fact. The divine purposes, the system of divine providence—all that has or will come to pass, all the law of God, all the promises of grace, the probation of time, the retribution of eternity, are dependent upon that great fact, that to be good is to be happy; to be wicked is to be miserable. It will never be otherwise unless God leaves his own universe, his government is extinguished, and his moral system rushes into confusion and universal ruin.

If thus the spiritual being within us possesses capacity for goodness, as has been represented, if it may run an immortal course, ever and endlessly opening and enriching itself with moral excellence; so may, so must it run a corresponding career of happiness. If the soul's virtue increases constantly and for ever, so must its fruit, true enjoyment. If the soul have no other qualities but goodness, so will it possess no other emotions but those of happiness. Is there no limit to the progress of its moral excellence, so is there no boundary to the happiness it will attain. Happiness, immeasurable, perfect, infinite, is laid out before the spirit; an entire eternity allotted to it to drink in constantly larger, richer, fuller measures. As its holiness, so its happiness, is progressive, measureless, illimitable, eternal. Gabriel, fast by the eternal throne, tell us, if thou hast no eye to penetrate the future, no heart to conceive and appreciate the blessedness of the long, eternal course yet before thee; tell, if thou canst, what thou hast been, delineate thy course of intelligence, purity, enjoyment. Let us know what is before us; we do follow thee; thy high, glorious course is ours also. We shall attain thy knowledge, we

shall receive all thy virtue; we shall feel all the raptures of thy bliss. Wouldst thou be happier than the archangel? Thou mayest be; be good, and thou shalt be. As thou passest on age after age, thy desires shall spread themselves immeasurably forth, and they all shall be met and satisfied; thy heart shall expand so that worlds will be too small for it, and it shall be satisfied, and so shall thy eternity be filled.

Hast thou, Christian, ever known a favored, religious hour—an hour of Scripture reading, an hour of prayer, an hour of hope, inspiring hope; when heaven seemed near and open, and thou didst enter in, and, forgetful of all earthly evils, didst join with the just made perfect in acts of worship before the throne; and thou didst see the smile of Jehovah resting upon thy service, and feel the delicious peace and joy of a heart at rest upon the bosom of divine everlasting love, and committing thyself to God, didst breathe out thy whole spirit in the words of a saint of old, Whom have I in heaven but thee and thine? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee—such one day shall be every hour, only it shall be all reality, instead of being partly in anticipation; only it shall be completely filled with bliss; only every hour shall be happier than the last. And we are all susceptible of a character which will secure to us this full, perfect, ever increasing, immeasurable, eternal happiness.

V. Another fact adds greatly to the interest we should feel in this spirit within. It may be lost.

The prospective possessions and blessedness, provided for our spiritual being now referred to, are not assured to us. They are proffered, but we may never attain them. Your spirit, my friend, may never run this glorious high course; it may never swell and open with intelligence, and holiness, and enjoyment, rising constantly a brighter and more blissful spirit towards the eternal throne. All this may be lost, though pressed upon acceptance, and another career be run, immortal, but not virtuous, of increasing intelligence to some extent, but not of happiness. This spiritual being of ours may sink to perdition, instead of rising to heaven, according as we are religious or irreligious here on earth. If the soul be sent away to run its course thus with ever enlarging capacities for suffering, its doom will be terrible, infinitely dreadful.

Consider this doom, that our solicitude and sympathies and interests may be the more awakened in behalf of this spiritual immortal being within. What is the loss of the soul? This is a subject on which I have little to say. All language fails here. Imagination itself cowers and shrinks from such a theme, inconceivably momentous, dreadfully infinite. Inadequate, utter feebleness, as are all our thoughts and language on this subject of the loss of the soul, we are in danger of being left to learn what it is by sad and eternal experience. We must therefore consider a few moments, and speak of it as well as we can. He that loses his soul, and thus goes down to spend his eternity in the great prison of the universe, loses all the pleasures of mind, all the pleasures, I mean, from the exercise and use of the intellectual faculties. The contemplation of truth, the employment and expansion of the understanding, constitute, no doubt, an important item of the happiness of the righteous in heaven.

The eye of religion directs itself to the great God, to a glory which

admits neither a superior nor an equal. The mind in heaven exercising itself upon those stupendous objects and events presented in the character and acts of Jehovah, will find some of its best enjoyments. But he that has lost his soul in this dark world below, will he find any delightful employment for his mental faculties? He will carry with him all his intellectual powers. But will he find any elevating objects of thought, and hours of bright and cheerful contemplation? Will all that is past afford one pleasant remembrance; will there be a single object *present* in all the universe on which the mind can fix with comfort? will the whole *future* eternity present one? Every object of thought will be one of gloom and wretchedness; every action of the mind will plant an unavailing sorrow in the heart. Can you conceive of the wretchedness of that individual to whom every succeeding thought brings a pang of unavoidable sorrow. Such is the long, long eternity of him who loses his soul. What shall it profit!

He that loses his soul in the world of woe, loses all the pleasures derived from the exercise of kind and benevolent feelings. It is more blessed to give than receive. The fullest wish for the good of another being, makes the heart happier that cherishes it. In heaven the kindly affections which flow out upon every inhabitant of that world, and feed and strengthen themselves by communicating this to all within their reach, bring into the soul a calm and pure happiness passing all understanding. But in the world of lost souls, no charities are known. Will the miserable dwellers there stretch out a hand to relieve a fellow-being? There is not one capable of relief in all that world; and if there were, none need it more than himself. The lost, moreover, will have no disposition to relieve, or bless, or console. All the amiable feelings will have died; all the kind and social affections will have been extinguished; all the ties of brotherhood and friendship that bound him to any other creature that exists will have been severed. He stands alone, his soul, scathed and withered, hath nothing left but sins and woes. Who would possess such a soul? Who would become for eternity such a desolate, selfish, most wretched being?

He that loses his soul, loses all self-approbation and peace of conscience. Sweet consciousness of innocence! Self-approval, calm, soothing, peace of conscience! They that have this, experience in part the joys of heaven. The heart which is a stranger to it, never yet has learned what happiness is. Lost sinners have no peace of conscience, none of the sweet happiness of conscious innocence. But in place of it the heart is filled with bitter—most bitter, self-condemning, with the arrowy stings of deep remorse. How writhes the mind which remorse has seized; how throbs the heart with anguish most intense! It is the worm that never dies; the cold gnawing at the heart which never will cease; the fang piercing through the soul, making it quiver with torture, which will not be withdrawn for ever and ever. Who can endure it? Who can hear the ceaseless, eternal condemnation for his own wounded spirit: "Ye knew your duty, but ye did it not." Who can bear a guilty conscience for ever and ever, for ever and ever? Who will do it for the sake of a little earthly good?

To lose the soul, is to lose all purity, all moral worth. In that dark region, there is nothing amiable, nothing undefiled, nothing pure. Not

a heart in all that world that has a single attractive quality, a single feature of loveliness ; not a being there possesses one trait of excellence or worth. Every character is that of unmingled wickedness ; every heart is black. Pollution, guilt, sin unrestrained, spreads and reigns through all the caverns of perdition. He that loses his soul, leaves all that is lovely, and good, and valuable, and pure, and worthy, and excellent, in this universe, and becomes one entire mass of sin.

"Oh, Sin ! traitor to God, ruiner of man,
Mother of woe and death and hell,
Depth ever deepening, darkness dark'ning still ;
Folly for wisdom, guilt for innocence,
Thing most unsightly,
Warring with God, and warring with holiness,
Desperate frenzy, madness of the will,
Drunkennes of the heart that nought can quench—
Oh, sin ! cursed sin, traitor to God,
And ruiner of man ; mother of woe,
And death and hell."

Can the soul, never, never, never, be redeemed from this destroyer—no never ! Who would become such a thing ? Who would be such an unmingled corruption to all eternity ? So does he become who is lost. "What shall a man be profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul ?"

I ought to add, he that loses his soul, loses all hope. Hope is one of the most cheerful guests of the human heart, the most constant and un-failing ; it affords relief in pain, strength and courage in disaster ; it is the sweetness of sorrow ; it is the last friend that leaves us in the world. The world has its evils, its bitter disappointments, its calamities that are dark and fearful, its heavy afflictions that almost press the life from our hearts, and makes us faint and sink down into the grave. But in all these calamities and sufferings, hope, cheering hope, attends us, relieves our woes and keeps the heart from entire wretchedness. There never was a cloud so dark that hope would not send through it a cheering ray, the hour of greatest peril and deepest sorrowing and distress, has hope in it, and, of course, some mingled grains of comfort. On the death-bed, to the very last, hope sits by and lights up the eye, when in consequence of the disease and the coming on of death, nothing else can. But when a sinner enters his home of sin and misery, hope forsakes him ; it is extinguished quite. Not its feeblest ray will cheer his heart again for ever and ever. Every expectation of any good, of one moment of happiness to all eternity has died within him. He is an object of black despair, of hopeless, utter, immeasurable, interminable misery.

"Burning continually, yet unconsumed,
Forever wasting, yet enduring still,
Dying perpetually, but never dead,
His are groans that never end, and sighs
That always sigh, and tears that ever weep !"

This is eternal death. This is the doom of him that loses his own soul !

Such is the doom to which this our spirit is exposed. This is the doom of which it is in the most imminent danger. This is the doom

which vast multitudes receive. Here are we, then, all between the great inheritance of saints, and the dreadful doom of lost souls. What vast interests are connected with what we are, with what we do ! No finite mind can measure or comprehend the good or ill which lie in the bosom of our futurity.

And will any individual in his right mind, instead of the eternal, progressive course of knowledge, of purity, of happiness, take the descending path to perfect ruin, to infinite suffering ? Have I any hearer who will himself sow seeds which are to bring forth the grapes of Sodom, who will kindle the fires in his own soul which shall no more be quenched ; who will cherish the worm that shall never die ? Have I a hearer who will do this instead of making his heart the seat of pure affections which will befit the kingdom of heaven ; instead of making the same heart the abode of eternally augmenting joy and peace ?

Act not, let me persuade you, against every remonstrance of conscience and every dictate of reason, and every chapter of the Bible, and every lesson of Divine Providence ; act not against every consideration which should influence a rational being. Abandon such folly. Renounce such heaven provoking sin. I do call on you to flee from the wrath to come. Come that wrath most surely will. There is a world of woe, awful and eternal. Soon you will have no other home. Heaven, blessed heaven ! Heaven of knowledge, heaven of holiness, of happiness ! perfect, glorious, eternal heaven ! Must these sinners never enter within thy gates ; never know thy seraphic joys, never mingle with thy holy people, never love nor praise thy God, the light of thee, the glory of thee, the glory of the whole universe ? Cease, ye hasty travellers to the eternal world, oh cease this fond pursuit of earthly good, and lay hold on eternal life. "What shall a man be profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul ?"

Hazard not so vast an interest by deferring to a time which, because future, may never come. Settle the great infinite concern while you can, while it is called *to-day*. "Do it now," says reason, says conscience. "Do it now," saith the Bible—heaven and hell respond, "Do it *now* !"

SERMON DCXXXIX.

BY REV. CHARLES WHITE, D.D.,

PRESIDENT OF WABASH COLLEGE.

OUR RELATION TO THE JUDGMENT.

"For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ."—ROM. xiv. 10.

THE knowledge of a future existence, which men have obtained without the Scriptures, has been vague, doubtful, and indistinct. Mostly conjectures and waking dreams. The Bible makes us familiar with the future world, makes known and describes with much particularity its events, its objects, the various condition of intelligent beings there. We think and speak of the things which are to be in the next world, after death, as certainties, as realities clearly known and seen, much as we do of what is yet future of this life. Being deeply interested personally in what is to occur in the eternal world, it is of great consequence and great favor to us that its affairs and objects are so fully and intelligibly opened to us. (Matt. xxv.) There is no event of eternity of which the Scriptures give us information more eventful and important than that referred to in the text, the final general judgment.

Some have inquired, "What can be the need or the object of a judgment, since men go to their award immediately on leaving the world?" Doubtless the object is to justify the ways of God to man, to angels, to the universe. To do this by making a visible exhibition of divine retributive justice, by a public actual award to mankind, according to the deeds done here in the body. Men do not receive wholly according to their deserts in the present world. But God is just. We are made by God to reverse only a Being of strict, unbending justice. Towards no other can we have the feelings which ought to be entertained towards a Supreme Divinity. Now if vice be not fully punished in this world, and if virtue be not fully rewarded, it seems certain that a just God will appoint a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness. It seems proper and suitable that it should be done in the presence of the world.

The righteous will see an illustration, at the judgment, of God's holiness which they had never seen, and be led to admiration and adoration higher, almost infinitely, than they have ever rendered to him. And sinners will doubtless feel the justice of their condemnation, as they had never felt it. Sinners even will then exclaim, "Just and equal, oh God, are all thy ways!" A judgment earlier than the end of the world could not have all the facts developed by which to show the justice of the final decisions. The results of men's doings, good or bad, reach on augmenting through all generations. When the gathering influence issuing from each man's life, has all been collected into one mighty accumulation, then the judgment will open.

Let us now inquire what is our own relation to the great day of account.

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Let us now inquire what is our own relation to the great day of account.

What are the conditions and circumstances in which we shall appear before the Supreme Judge of quick and dead.

I. We shall on that day assume in all respects, the condition in which we shall remain—remain for ever.

Then all that pertains to our being is settled, fixed, definitely, finally. Previously changes had attended us always ; we never in all respects were just what we had been before, we were incessantly changing form, place, circumstances. The body itself had been undergoing a concealed change as to its matter and substance, and a visible one in its growth through infancy, childhood, to full vigor ; and then in its progress to decay, and death, and dissolution. The soul had been subject to mutations no less visible and striking. Its desires, purposes, passions, pleasures, griefs, had been undergoing large unceasing changes. Uncertainty, too, had been the condition of our being, we were habitually in suspense respecting the future, *never knowing* what would be even on the morrow. So doubtful were all things which were yet to come, that anticipation, conjecture, apprehension, were prevailing states of the soul. Both vicissitude and uncertainty, being the prominent conditions of our life, were subjects of more remark and moralizing than all others united. It was on every tongue, that nothing was lasting or permanent with us, nothing certain ; that there was no rest, that life was like a tale that is *told* ; not a record, remark, or inscription upon marble, a constant succession of new words, new incidents, so that we never knew what was yet to come.

At the day of judgment, all this is reversed entirely. Then all change with us and all uncertainty cease ; there is no more even the *shadow* of turning in any respect. What we are on that day, we are for ever and ever. Before were preparations, now effects ; before antecedents, now results. The body undergoes a great change at the resurrection, is made spiritual, incorruptible, immortal, susceptible of pleasure or pain beyond what it had been inconceivably. But this is its last change. The body stands up before God just as it will be to all eternity. The soul, too, in this refitted lodgement, possesses the appetites and designs, the whole moral aspect and condition precisely, which it will retain unaltered. This is the grand final crisis in its moral concerns, in its immortality. It is to be moulded and formed no more. All that can affect us at all, is past ; we are fixed. We have had various allotments, now the allotment is one and eternal. If outward circumstances were to change, we should not. But outward things will not change. We and our circumstances, all are settled as the pillars of heaven.

There is no place for anticipation, all is present ; nor for apprehension, all that will be is. There is no more hope, no more fear, all is existent reality, stern, uniform, unchanging, unchangeable. Succession of time is no more. Henceforth all is one steady, unalterable, eternal, now ! ! Oh, if such is the crisis in my being and my condition at the judgment of the great day : if there I am to be fixed unchangeably and eternally, both in soul and body ; if as I am then, so I am to be for ever ; what shall I be then ? What character shall I present to take the unchanging, unchangeable stamp of eternity ? How solicitous should we be, if for this *life* our condition were to be all fixed on a certain day of it. If with our

advantages and disadvantages on that certain day; if with the same heart, honor, wealth, happiness, home, friends, society, we should ever after unalterably remain. How careful to place ourselves in the best possible position! What character, impenitent one, will you form and wear to appear in at the judgment, never to be changed through all the interminable ages which follow? At any hour you may drop into eternity, with your present heart, never, never to be improved. Then are you lost irrevocably. Escape, cast off these garments of sin, and put on the garments of light.

II. We shall appear at the judgment with our *character* only.

In this world men appear with so much that is extraneous to what is really themselves, with so much that is mere outside show, with so many appurtenances, that we seldom see simple men, real human character, uncolored, uncovered, just as it is. It seems to be the very general desire of men, not to *be*, but to *appear* to be; to be accredited for something whether possessed or not. I suppose it may with truth be said that one half of the labors and endeavors of this life are to make these appearances; when this is not the aim or the effort, it may still be true that the real character may be covered over and concealed by wealth and titles and honors, and great pretensions. Perhaps I am making a representation which may seem rather too strong. But to a great extent certainly human life is a factitious scene, a great deal is mere profession, gay decoration, superficial show.

We are all dazzled and caught with appearances; we all think too little, and care too little, for substance, for interior solid excellence. At the judgment we shall appear stripped of all disguises and all extraneous adornings—mere human beings, simple men, nothing more; unvarnished, unconcealed men. An existing soul with its renewed body; existence and attributes of existence—*being* and its character—this will be all. Every thing else will be left behind us. Authors will be there without their renown; poets and philosophers will stand in the same indiscriminate mass with those their cotemporaries, too ignorant to know that they lived. The orator will be there without the charms of his eloquence, without the thrilled and applauding assembly, all *simple men*, with their character. The king will be there without his crown or sceptre; the slave without his chains. All the men of place and power and pride, without their honors, without their titles, without their worldly elevation. The conqueror will be there without the splendor of his achievements, or the fame of his military prowess. Alexander, Napoleon, Wellington, will stand there by the side of the humblest menial; men no more; men all undistinguished except in the moral qualities of the soul. The young absorbed with tempting pleasures, they that had rolled in wealth, and erected splendid dwellings, shone in equipage, and fared sumptuously every day, will be there with nothing of all they appeared with here, poor as the neglected being that slept upon straw and begged from door to door—mere *men*, with nothing but their character. How ignorant, how empty, how little is left, when the temporary and the external is gone! when all is gone except vanity, pride, folly, and sin. Ah, how poor will multitudes appear with only their character!

What is my character? this is the important question. All that I can carry with me to the judgment of the great day are the unmasked attributes of my soul. What is my *real character* in the sight of God? Did a human being ever propose to himself a more momentous inquiry? Your *character*! It is every thing to you; it is all you have; it decides and settles every thing. Have you the character with which you are willing to stand at the bar of God; which will admit you into heaven!

III. This suggests the third topic of discourse. All character is to undergo a full examination at the day of judgment.

We shall appear then for this purpose. The scriptures use the language of earthly courts of justice in relation to this our appearance before God for an investigation of our character. Jesus is called the Judge. He is said to descend out of heaven, girded with principalities and powers, and with great glory, to sit upon a throne of judgment, and all the holy angels with him.

Then we are informed, mankind are assembled before him, each for examination and trial. This last audit will be in many respects different from one before a human tribunal. Earthly judges are ignorant and imperfect men; they may unconsciously and without design, prompted by the best intentions even, mistake facts, err in opinion, pronounce a rotten character sound. Passion and prejudice may make their decisions partial and wrong, "a gilded hand may shove by justice." The *deeply* wicked may have some hopes at the bar of a fellow man, not himself of clean hands. *Often* do the guilty here go undetected and unpunished. But the Judge at whose bar we shall stand at the last day is not ignorant. We shall find ourselves before one who knows more of us than we know of ourselves, who at an instant glance passes over our conduct and through our hearts. His is an eye of omniscience; nothing belonging to us is concealed from him any more than our persons can be from the eye of each other. And he is not partial; nor is he capable of bribes, of prejudice, of any injustice. *No wickedness whatever will escape detection and exposure at the bar of God.*

Unlike earthly courts, witnesses and proofs will not be wanted or waited for. Every man will be his own witness. Memory, furnished with new vigor and fidelity, will retrace every step of life, and present every outward act, every moving of the internal spirit in one distinct, full picture; the conscience, wakened from the dead, clear, unbiassed, unerring, will see and know and declare the whole character of the man. If this were not so, no witnesses would be wanted. The Almighty will be witness as well as judge. At his bar it matters not if your deeds were those of a darkness so deep that no eye of a fellow being could penetrate, so distant no ear could hear; no matter if done on some lone isle beyond the possibility of all earthly observation. No matter if memory and conscience were hushed, so as never to reveal. The omnipresent God was with you and heard and saw all that was felt and done. All is perfectly known.

You will mark what has been just now intimated, that the examination before the bar of God will extend to the *intents of the heart*. A trial at an earthly tribunal has little to do except with external actions. If the designs and desires of the spirit within never proceed to development and

to action, what can civil courts do with them? They have no jurisdiction over the movements of the soul. Anger and revenge may rankle there; the vilest passions, the most destructive propensities may be fed and nourished there into fearful strength; and earthly judges may take no cognizance and make no inquiries; they may have no knowledge of the matter.

This little busy world within, though the spring of all our actions, though the abode of all the elements of our character, yet lying beyond the scrutiny of human tribunals; human laws have no penalties for what dwells there. How different from this our examination at the day of judgment. The character and operations of the heart, the inward temper, the desires, the motives, will be the principal and most important subjects of inquiry. The examination will be no less than a search into the purity and impurity of every emotion that ever existed in the soul. The purity or impurity of every word that the tongue has uttered, of every action that the hand has done.

Nor is this the whole investigation. We shall be inquired of as to all that we have *neglected to feel or to do*. We shall be interrogated as to all the wants of men which we did not relieve; the woes of men which we did not pity; as to all the instances in which we did not weep with those that weep, and rejoice with those that rejoice; as to all the instances in which we might have blessed a fellow being, but did not; in which we might have been grateful to God; been filled with the moving of deep affection for his pure character; been exercised with holy trusting in his government and his grace, and were not,—I need not proceed. All that we have felt, all that we have not felt, all that we have said or not said; done and not done, all that we are, and all that we are not, is to be examined and unfolded there—the entire man; the whole character of his heart and his acts.

Who can abide such a scrutiny? Who dares open his inmost soul to the eye of God, and then receive according to his character? What disclosures at the judgment! How confounded will men be to see their secret wickedness all developed to open day. What shame and confusion and alarm, when all their thoughts and feelings throng before them. Oh! the foul abominations that never before saw the light, when all human conduct is declared. The hatreds, the envies, the jealousies, the bitterness, the selfishness, the impurities, the ingratitude, the murmurings, when the secrets of all hearts shall be made known. Add no more guilt to your character. Lengthen no farther your fearful catalogue of sins. Stop, stop! Seek forgiveness and mercy of heaven. Seek for Christ's righteousness to cover the multitude of your sins. It is too far that you have gone already. Pause before you farther go.

IV. You have anticipated my next remark. A separation will take place among us at the judgment.

There will be then no more mingling and confounding of moral qualities, whether relating to the human heart, or to human life. The right and the wrong, the pure and the vile, will stand visibly at *distant extremes* from each other, and without any relationship, sympathy, or communion.

To every eye of every intelligent being, they will *appear* at a wide remove from each other—all will *feel* the broad distinction.

This, so marked, so entire, so seen, so felt, is at the judgment, the grand distinction in which all others are lost. What though one had honors, or had wealth, or had education, or gifted intellect, or were prominent in the circle of fashion or pleasure, or were thrifty in business, added field to field, and had not where to bestow his goods! *Is he right, or is he wrong?* Is he good, or is he bad, before God? This is the only inquiry at the day of judgment. This, and nothing but this, divides the universe. Oh, how worthless, how insignificant, at the bar of God, all these worldly possessions and elevations that interest us now! what shadows! A moment they are with us and are gone, leaving no trace, no benefit. *To be good, or to be bad!* This makes a distinction, indeed; one of immeasurable importance. Neither time, nor death, nor *eternity*, can annihilate it. It *widens* as futurity rolls it ages away.

I have said a separation is to take place at the judgment. We perceive when all is thus unveiled, when all human character is thus laid open, it takes place of itself. Tell us not that the great Judge of all is arbitrary, partial, or unjust, in the last great separation. This distinction of character, so wide, so perfect, so important, in which all other distinctions are lost, placing men in moral qualities at a distance from each other, no less than Satan is from God, hell from heaven; this, all open and apparent, will of itself produce the final separation, will remove the righteous and the wicked widely and for ever away from each other, as light from darkness. They cannot join in the same employments, they cannot mingle and associate in the same society, cannot dwell in the same world.

What an innumerable multitude will be present, and be interested in this scene of separation. All the inhabitants of our country—twenty-six millions—collected together, would make a great assembly. Imagine the inhabitants of the whole earth assembled—a thousand millions. Add this number to itself, 10, 20, 40, 80, 100 times: what throngs of millions! But you have scarcely begun the computation of all the generations which the stream of time hath poured into the mighty multitude before God. The vast congregation is almost of numbers without number. We are not so much interested, however, in that fact, as in this included in it, that this very assembly will be there to be divided. Oh, to be divided! We have lived and loved in peace; may we not dwell together? These families, may *they* not dwell together? No, there must be a separation: friendship, affection, relationship, are not regarded. No distinction is known but good and bad. The good are not those who have entirely *kept* the law—none have done this—the good are those who have repented, and had their sins blotted out; believed, and had them forgiven—those who have been renovated, sanctified, accepted.

The separation is between the penitent and impenitent, the believing and the unbelieving. This distinction sunders families; this divides friends, kindred, all. A husband is called to the one side; the wife to the other. Parents are called to one side, children to the other. What partings! Can it be a reality? Husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and friends part, not as on earth to reassemble and reunite—they part never again to meet. Oh, what partings! They have

sat at the same board, joyed and suffered and lived as one. They cannot part. They that have lived in brotherhood and affection; in blessed intercourse and sympathy: they cannot part. The father cannot part with his son; brother cannot part from brother. But they must. No, no, no; they need not! The Day of Judgment has not come. They need not; they must not! It is yet a day of grace. I hear words of mercy. Seize the precious hour while it waits; make your peace with God, and you shall not be divided; you yet shall be one.

But many, many will be found who deferred, deferred, and lost their day of grace, and died in all their sins. Thoughtless millions will have been guilty of this folly. Perhaps some of this assembly may after all be among these. The great assemblage before God is divided—the righteous from the wicked. Then the Omniscient Judge shall say to them on his right hand, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” But to them on his left hand he shall say, “Depart from me.” Could you hear it, and live? *From me!* from all mercy, all good, all purity, all happiness—from the only Saviour of men! Who can, who shall, hear such words from Jesus the Redeemer? Then shall he say to them on his left hand, “Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels.” And these—*these*, who are *these*? And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal. And is this never to be revoked? No; never! The wicked are never again to smile; the righteous never again to weep.

This is the closing scene of this world’s affairs. Here ends all that God wished to do on this theatre, all that he wished to develope. All the nations that were to appear, had appeared; all the petty states that were to rise and fall, had risen and fallen; all the crowns been worn, all the honors been gained, all the servitude and submissions been rendered, justice had done its earthly work; oppression all it could. Righteousness had its day and wickedness. The earth had made its revolutions; the stars run their courses, the seasons been finished, days had been numbered to come not again, the sun and moon had accomplished their purposes, and cease to move and shine. All conversation and intercourse had ceased; all sound of joy or praise or blasphemy was done. All was done. All the world’s feverish agitation, ambitious projects, enterprises, distinctions, joys, sorrows, hopes, all had come to pass. Another, a new, an eternal scene is opened.

Thus is the judgment a grand epoch in the progress of God’s infinite affairs—the day of days. All has been merged in one great distinction of good and bad; and, as we have said, the good are gathered into heaven—the bad shut up in hell. The earth and the works that are therein, are burned up; the heavens are passed away with a great noise. Here we ought to inquire:

1. What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness.

Every Christian is most deeply interested in the solemnities of the judgment day. The most glorious and the most awful of all motives here summon you to righteousness and to duty. “Buried in sleep,”

indeed thrice dead you must be, "if you do not feel yourselves roused by these awful things to diligence and vigor in the christian life." Is there any thing you would not do to rescue your immortality from the doom of ungodly men.

"Let me solemnly urge you to make your calling and election sure, to resist temptation, to overcome iniquity, to keep the faith, that you may finish your course with joy. Look steadfastly, Christian, for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God, even our Saviour, Jesus Christ, that when he, who is the believer's life, shall appear, you may appear with him in glory."

2. But are there not many in this house whose lives furnish no evidence that they are the saints of the most high God? You, too, are interested, yea, most fearfully interested in the great day of the Lord. All shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ. All of us shall hear "the call of the archangel," and rise from the grave; all of us shall see the Judge descend, the judgment of the final day revealed, the books opened. Who of us will appear there to receive the sinner's last sentence.

That doom is terrific, overwhelming, eternal, irrevocable. Must it be heard? Shall it be? Whose heart does not tremble at the thought that it *may* be all his own? When the mountains quake, the hills melt, and the earth is burnt up at the presence of God; all the wicked will be filled with consternation and despair. Who can stand before the divine indignation? who can abide the fierceness of his anger? What emotions will be felt by every impenitent man, when it is all over with him, and he is lost—lost irrecoverably! Is he ruined, undone? Is there no hope? Oh, his bursting heart! He cannot bear his doom. He cannot endure everlasting burnings. How would his bosom "heave with delirious ecstasy to hear of another day of grace!" another word of mercy from the Saviour; another opportunity of repentance.

"But no day of grace will ever return to him;" no voice of mercy will ever reach him. He goes to his home, dark, dreadful, eternal. *He has gone!* Oh! he has gone. "The doors of heaven will be opened no more." "Not one gleam of hope," age after age, as eternity moves on, not one gleam of hope will ever dawn on the regions of sin and sorrow, where he dies, and dies forever!

"Oh, that ye were wise, that ye understood these things, that ye would consider your latter end!"

